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ABSTRACT

When the new government of the Australian state of Victoria was elected in 1992, it began the most radical change to an education system in the history of the country, introducing the Schools of the Future initiative. The underlying rationale, which has its roots in 20 years of experience in Victoria, is that quality outcomes of schooling can only be assured when decision making takes place at the local level. The Schools of the Future program has been implemented in stages, with schools formulating a key feature of the program, a charter at different times. Through the school charter, school communities have the opportunity to determine the future character and goals of the school. School councils determine the educational policies of the school within the framework of the school charter, which is approved by the state Board of Studies. A new funding structure has been established for the Schools of the Future, with a formula-based model of a base element and an equity element based on student characteristics. Financing has been set aside to improve the technological capacity of the Schools of the Future. With all these changes, the self-management of the schools depends on the focus of each school on the needs of its community. A core-plus model of education, with a state-mandated core curriculum and community-determined pluses, might be the way to ensure responsiveness to the needs of the particular community. Schools could become the focus for community development for the whole of the community as well as the educational programs of children. (Contains 18 references.) (SLD)

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Victoria's Schools of the Future: Lessons for Community Educators

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The New World of Education

Drucker, in his most recent book, *Post-Capitalist Society*, argues 'Every few hundred years in Western history there occurs a sharp transformation...Within a few short decades, society rearranges itself its world view; its basic values; its social and political structures; its arts, its key institutions. Fifty years later, there is a new world... We are currently living through such a transformation (Drucker, 1993:1). This recent move towards more local decision-making at the school site could well be considered to be the first major shift in the way in which education has been administered since it became compulsory in most Westernised societies in the 1870s and 1880s.

Currently, many governments, in different parts of the world are involved in the restructuring of public education. The restructuring activity, is being accomplished by significant decentralisation of responsibility for education from centralised education bureaucracies to the school site, and is not confined to one or two countries. Substantial activity has occurred, with school site management in the USA and some Canadian Provinces, the move towards school-based councils or boards in many school systems, self managing schools in Australia, the opportunity for schools to becoming self-governing in the UK, or being forced to become self-governing in New Zealand. This activity is one that, in itself, might hearten many community educators, who have long argued that people at the school site should be empowered and should assist in the identification and resolution of community goals. If it were not for the removal of government funding from public schooling and the imposition of rigid objectives and accountability procedures at the same time, this might be the next step towards universal community schools.

Governments are starting to use language that has been used by community educators for over fifty years, 'empowerment', 'ownership', 'participation' and 'involvement' are words used today in mainstream education. Judy Codding, a high school principal from California, and recently appointed as the Director of the National Alliance for Restructuring Education, indicated that in the United States 'it is now generally recognised that top-down mandates do not work' and that what was needed was 'top-down support for bottom-up reform' (Codding, 1993:5-6).

Victorian Schools of the Future

When the new Victorian liberal government was elected in late 1992, after more than a decade in opposition, they set in train the most radical change to an education system in Australia's history. They introduced a new policy for the governance and operation of schools in the state, which was titled the Schools of the Future. This program is the blueprint for the delivery of quality education into the next century. It has involved a considerable policy shift from the previous way in which government education was managed and structured and involves a considerable commitment of resources by the government to implement the plan properly.

However, this restructuring activity, which some people perceive to be recent, and consequently rushed, can actually be traced back more than twenty years. The Report to the Commonwealth Government by the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, entitled *Schools in Australia* (Karmel, 1973) first presented the issues of equality, devolution and community involvement as part of a national educational debate, one that was to change the face of Australian schools dramatically for the first time in a hundred years. In Victoria, by 1975, school councils were established in every government school to ensure a high level of local participation. The main feature of the responsibilities of school councils was the ability to advise the principal and staff on issues of educational policy, an activity that was later strengthened by the Labor government which came to power in 1982. Other functions of school councils included maintaining and cleaning the school facility, overseeing proper expenditure of school finances, finding accommodation for teachers where necessary and helping to improve the school's image within the local community. By 1984, school councils had become responsible for determining the general educational policy of the school within guidelines set down by the Minister and by 1985 school councils had a role to play in the selection of the principal for their school.

When the Liberals returned to power in 1992, the new 'Schools of the Future' program had many similarities to the New Zealand model of decentralisation, but also used various models from the UK, the USA and Canada. However, there are differences between Schools of the Future, and each of the models that were used as a guide for its development. Schools of the Future will be self-managing, but each school is governed by the rules and regulations of the state system whereas other models of management and governance are either on a smaller American school district or the British Local Education Authority level, where schools are locally managed, or go much further, such as the British Grant Maintained Schools, where schools effectively can opt out of the state system and become pseudo private schools and the New Zealand model where the education system is effectively dismantled altogether. The Schools of the Future program changes the relationship between schools, the Department of School Education (DSE) and government. Not only is there now a

contract between the individual school and the DSE, (the school charter) upon which school funding is based and accounted for, but many of the support services previously provided by the DSE will no longer be available, and schools will have to contract with individual providers for them, either singly, or in conjunction with other schools.

The underlying rationale for this structure comes from the 'commitment to the view that quality outcomes of schooling can only be assured when decision making takes place at the local level' (DSE, 1994a: 2), a view expressed in the 1992 government policy paper 'Education: Giving students a chance'. The implementation process for changing the system involved the formation of a Schools of the Future Task Force to develop a more detailed statement from the policy paper. Three months of extensive interaction with practising school principals resulted in the publication of the *Schools of the Future Preliminary Paper* (DSE, 1992). The school charter became the cornerstone of the program with a Board of Studies and an Office of School Review to provide curriculum frameworks and an accountability framework respectively. The preliminary paper was forwarded to all government schools with an invitation for the community to discuss the paper and decide whether they wished to join the pilot program.

One main difference between the Victorian program and that of New Zealand is that whereas all schools in New Zealand had to implement the reform simultaneously, the Schools of the Future program was implemented in stages. Three hundred and twenty five schools from over seven hundred applicants were selected as part of the pilot program which commenced in January 1994. A further group of 497 schools commenced the professional development required to become a school of the future by January, 1995 and by July 1995 all schools in the state had become a School of the Future, apart from a few that have refused to take part.

The pilot schools were involved in the translation of the preliminary paper into DSE policy. A six-month professional development program, involving pilot school principals, teachers, school councillors and administrative staff, enabled the pilot schools to become fully operational from January, 1994. During the first year of operation, pilot schools trialled self management and were involved in further policy development and amendment. Key features of the Schools of the Future program include:

- schools will be self-managing, that is, they will be responsible for finance, staffing and curriculum decisions through the school council;
- the role of the principal as administrative and educational leader will be strengthened. The principal will be responsible for curriculum leadership, resource and personnel management, school organisation and staff selection;
- a broad curriculum and standards framework will be established by a new Board of Studies. Within this framework, schools will be able to develop their own programs;

- each school will develop a charter, containing a set of agreed expectations, (including a student and staff code of conduct) and is an agreement with the Minister. The charter will be the key accountability document and will be the basis of reporting to the community;
- an Office of Schools Review has been established to ensure a process of accountability. A key factor in this is the measuring of student progress and achievement;
- school council powers are to be extended to include the employment of non teaching staff and the contracted service of teachers employed for special projects. The authority to determine educational policies within the framework of the school charter remains with school councils;
- Schools of the Future have complete control over their financial resources. Each school will receive a global budget which covers staff, services, equipment and supplies;
- Schools will determine the mix of staff best suited to their needs within their staffing establishment. Staff appraisal will be a matter for the school;
- schools are provided with computer and networking facilities (including interactive television capabilities) and appropriate training.

(DSE: 1994a)

The support structure for Schools of the Future was created through the development of 60 positions of District Liaison Principal (DLPs). Each DLP works with a group of about 30 schools in a collegiate, rather than line management, fashion. The role of the DLP includes acting as a change agent, providing advice and assistance to principals, assisting with professional development, and ensuring that schools have access to student services and curriculum support staff. In addition, a small number of support staff are located in each of 2 metropolitan and 5 country regions.

The key feature of the Schools of the Future project is the school charter, which is the major accountability document between the school and its community (for the achievements of its students), on the one hand and the school and the Directorate of School Education (DSE) (for the proper expenditure of state resources), on the other. Through the school charter, school communities will have the opportunity to determine the future character, ethos and goals of the school. The school charter is developed by the school council in consultation with the community and with support provided by the principal and staff. The charter is developed using DSE guidelines that reflect government policy and expectations. The charter, which operates for three years, but could be amended where required, includes:

- a description of the school's philosophy and future directions;
- its goals and the priorities identified as requiring further development;
- how it intended to deliver the eight state mandated curriculum areas and any other special enrichment activities specific to that school;
- codes of practice for school council members, principals and staff;
- a code of conduct and the discipline approach used for students of the school;
- details of the processes used for monitoring and reporting student performance;

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- a prediction of student numbers and an indicative budget for the period of the charter;
- a statement that the school agrees to operate within the terms of the charter and to agree to take all reasonable steps to ensure the school meets its goals within the available resources.

(DSE: 1994b)

The critical features of the charter are the school goals and priorities, which relate to curriculum, school environment, management, resource allocation and monitoring performance. Each goal is accompanied by indicators which enable achievement of that goal to be measured. The priorities are based on planned and continuous improvement, which require a school to analyse its performance and using the results of this analysis generate priorities for improved student performance. Schools report annually to the DSE and their local community on their performance in achieving their goals and priorities. Every three years a review will be conducted at the school in conjunction with the Office of School Review to assist with the development of a new charter.

The accountability structure of Victorian education includes a Board of Studies to provide curriculum leadership and assistance to schools. The Board is responsible for course development and accreditation, course evaluation and assessment of student performance (including school completion and certification). The Board developed a Curriculum and Standards Framework for each of the eight key learning areas; Arts, English, Health and Physical Education, Languages Other Than English, Mathematics, Science, Studies of Society and the Environment and Technology, which guided the development of curriculum from preparatory grade through year 10 within the schools. The frameworks contains two components; curriculum content and standards of student achievement. The standards of student achievement are tested by a standardised, statewide test called the Learning Assessment Project (LAP). In May 1995, the Learning Assessment Project (LAP) was first implemented in primary schools. Twice during the course of a student's time in primary school, his or her progress will be assessed against statewide standards in eight 'key learning areas' of the curriculum. Guarantees of confidentiality and an assurance that the data would not be used to make comparisons between individual students, teachers or schools were given. This, on the one hand, alleviated some of the concerns of teachers and parents about the impending use of 'league tables', where schools are ranked against one another, a feature of the British education system, but, on the other hand, made it difficult for the system to identify schools that were not achieving and doing something about it.

At the completion of the secondary level of education, students undertake a two year program called the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), where a broad range of curriculum offerings not only provide the subjects required for students to achieve tertiary entrance, but also provides those with no intention of going on to university a

variety of more vocationally oriented, or personal development, programs. The tertiary entrance score is achieved by Common Assessment Tasks (CATs) which must be completed if a student wishes to proceed further. A substantial proportion of the assessment of these tasks is carried out by the school, but a standardisation of marking across the state is achieved by the a General Achievement Test (GAT). All students involved in the final year of VCE studies will be obliged to sit for GAT as a means of providing a check on the distribution of school-based CATs within the certificate. Should the school's VCE performance fall within the tolerance range of that school's performance on the GAT, then the results for the VCE assessment will be confirmed. If not, the VCE results will be externally reviewed. In the first implementation of this activity in 1994, up to 20% of schools had to have their assessment reviewed in various subjects areas. In 1994, the review process, which resulted in some students having their marks either upgraded or downgraded, indicated that the changes in grades were very slight and that overall, the marking had been consistent across the state. However, in 1995, substantial numbers of students in mathematics, some from very good schools, had their results downgraded by up to four grades, which indicated that more work on the assessment processes was still needed.

At the school level, school councils have the authority to determine the educational policies of the school within the framework of the school charter, will be responsible for maintaining the school plant and grounds and will employ non teaching staff and contract the services of teachers for particular projects.

The Schools of the Future program has implemented a totally new basis of funding government schools in Australia, called the Global Budget. This is a formula-based funding model which consists of a base element for all schools, together with an equity element based on the characteristics of the students enrolled. It provides funding for all school-based costs, including staff salaries and on-costs, operating expenses and school maintenance. During 1994 the basis for implementing this funding model was developed for implementation in 1995. It was then further refined in 1995 for 1996. The Global Budget consists of two components, a core component, based on each schools' student populations, and an indexed component based on the special learning characteristics of the students. The School Global Budget for Schools of the Future includes six components:

- Core funding, which would comprise at least 80 percent of the total budget (with additional core funding for early childhood (Preps-Grade 2) and for administrative support in smaller schools);
- Additional funding for students with disabilities and impairments (6 levels of funding ranging from $3,000 to $23,000 per student);
- Additional funding for students at educational risk (focusing in 1995 on students who are at risk of not being literate by the end of year 1);
- Additional funding for students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), with 7 levels of funding ranging from 1.3 times the normal student allocation (for a student in primary grades who has been more than

one year, but less than three years, in an Australian school) and 2.9 (for a student in secondary school who has been more than one year, but less than seven years, in Australia) to 14.5 times the normal student allocation (for a student in secondary school who has been less than one year in an Australian school). However, a school must have a minimum number of NESB students to apply;

- Additional funding for rurality (ranging from $20 to $400 per student, for primary schools, depending on the size of the school in a defined rural town or locality with similar allocations for secondary schools of less than 500 in non-provincial locations) and isolation ($20 per pupil for schools which are more than 30 kilometres from a town of 3,000), to guarantee staffing and a range of curricula in these schools;
- Additional funding for priority programs such as:
  - Science and technology
  - Professional Development
  - Instrumental Music
  - Languages Other Than English (LOTE)
  - Physical and Sport Education
  - Arts in Australia.

(from DSE, 1994c)

Further refinement of the system in 1995 concentrated efforts on identifying strategies for providing additional resources for students 'at-risk' and supplementing schools to enable those students to obtain additional assistance.

Considerable financing has also been set aside to improve the technological capacity of Schools of the Future. Since financial and personnel responsibilities have been devolved to schools there was a necessity for each school to interface with the central computer in a meaningful way. This was accomplished by issuing all schools with a standardised computer hardware and software system. The use of CD-ROM as means of publishing official documents brings the dissemination of Ministry policy into the 21st Century.

In 1994, an Interactive Satellite Television (ISTV) program was launched, where 2500 Victorian government and non-government schools with newly installed satellite dishes received centrally produced programs such as Science and Technology Education in Primary Schools (STEPS) and Primary Access to Languages by Satellite (PALS) and students interacted directly with the programs' presenters by either fax or telephone. Professional development programs for teachers and general access for other community groups were also available using this new technology. Early reports on the implementation of this technology have indicated that there are still a number of difficulties with this system, but these, in time, can be expected to be overcome. In 1995, the Classrooms of the Future project was announced. Its bold goals included having one computer for every four students in state government schools and to provide access to the Internet for all students. Unfortunately, no announcement was made of how the money involved in this exercise (approximately $200 million) is going

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to be raised. Many are concerned that parents will have to carry the load, and in Victoria, some parents are better able to do this than others.

All of these changes have involved considerable commitment to professional development for principals, teachers and school councillors. Professional development for principals included issues related to the global budget, leadership and management, administrative staff undertook programs improving their understanding of the new computer system and the global budgeting process (including personnel management), teachers were involved in programs related to curriculum leadership in response to school charters, and school councillors were given programs to help them to understand the implementation of Schools of the Future, particularly with reference to the development of school charters.

The 'marketplace' of education

One of the concerns that has come with the introduction of Schools of the Future is that the introduction of the market approach to education will create further disparities between 'good' schools and 'poorer' schools, as those with funds have the opportunity to shift their children to the 'better' schools, and those from less well off families do not. The development of the market economy for education was encapsulated by Chubb and Moe (1990), who advocated a high level of autonomy for schools, and parental choice of schools, on the basis that this would lead to greater diversity in schooling and increased student outcomes, the principle upon which the American Charter School system has been founded. This position has fuelled the debate on educational vouchers, as discussed in a previous section. They advance the notion that:

> student achievement is not affected by any of the usual 'top-down' proscriptive solutions that public school wizards employ - more spending per pupil, higher teacher salaries, lower pupil-to-teacher ratios, or even higher graduation requirements. The very fact that these remedies are imposed by a government eons away from the campus level, renders them unworkable.
>
> The effective school is an autonomous school...organized and run to immediately meet students' and parents' needs, and not along government guidelines.
>
> (Auten, 1995: 2)

In a later document (1992) Chubb and Moe restate their position, in a way that considers decentralisation through school-based management as a potential barrier to true improvement. They argue that of the three major forms of restructuring, decentralisation, accountability and choice, that choice alone is the key to improvement. In the current wave of reform, accountability is controlled by those outside of the school, and:

> Local management of schools is a good idea, as far as it goes, because it seeks to enhance local autonomy, but it does this by keeping the traditional top-down system intact and decentralizing certain budgetary and decisionmaking authority to the school level. Bureaucracy remains a problem - there are plenty of rules, for instance, that limit school autonomy and specify exactly how and when it is to be exercised. More important, the hierarchy of authority remains, full of politicians and administrators eager to expand their dominion over the schools ... In this kind of system, the schools are only safe from political attack and control when they do not use their autonomy to strike out on their own.
>
> (Chubb and Moe, 1992: 11-12)

They argue that with true choice, schools 'run their own affairs as they see fit...When. choice is taken seriously [school-self management] is beside the point' (Chubb and Moe, 1992: 12). This suggests that schools must look after their local communities in their entirety, rather than simply concern themselves with the education of children. Of course, those in community education will know that to educate the child properly, the whole community must be involved. The self-managing school perhaps provides an opportunity to do this, unless governments become to heavy handed in what they require. A current concern of the Victorian Schools of the Future is that the level of decision-making allowed at the school level is minimal, compared with the overwhelming influence of the government and the Department of School Education.

The challenge ahead

For the self-management of schools to work, each school must focus on the needs of its community, as well as those of the state, only one of which is to produce academically educated children. Parents, teachers and community members need help to do this properly, since few are trained in the art of community development. However, without developing a wider view of the role of school, schools will never be fully cost-effective and perhaps will never achieve the levels of quality for which they strive. For schools to exist and thrive, they need community support. For many years schools were seen as places from which people were glad to leave. In Victoria, the past twenty years has seen a markedly improved attitude, and greater levels of interaction and support, between local communities and their school. This has seen the drop out rate go from 66% in 1980 to 18% in 1993, with considerably less resources being allocated to schools.

Perhaps now is the time for the next step, and the move towards self-managing schools, through Schools of the Future, may provide us with the direction we need. The school effectiveness movement has demonstrated that some schools can overcome the socio-economic deficiencies students bring with them. Perhaps it is now time to address some of those community-based deficiencies through education. As Minzey (1981) indicated, a school can be defined in two ways. Either it is a community facility

that is sometimes used for the education of children, or it is not a community facility that is sometimes used for the education of children.

Some exciting possibilities emerge from the self-managing perspective that Schools of the Future brings. Some schools might opt to be year-round schools, with no additional work for any one person but a twenty five percent increase in productivity through better facility usage, and with increased leadership development as well. Others might develop inter-generational activities, where parents and grandparents utilise the schools for their own purposes, but in doing so demonstrate to the children that education is a life-long process. All schools will need to start utilising the facilities that every community has to enrich school programs. Some might encourage the development of health and social welfare services within the school building, and in return children can be protected and kept healthy. These possibilities would take further thought in both the concept of school and the design of school buildings. Schools of the Future provide the opportunity for schools to become fully functional community facilities, providing a variety of services on a year round basis, thus developing a wider range of community support than many schools currently enjoy.

Schools of the Future and Community Education

The restructuring movement has a long way to go if it is to really address the needs of the society. Society does not have one set of needs, because it is made up of many communities, each with a different set. There may be a common thread, which perhaps calls for a common curriculum, but there is also the requirement that local communities have a large say in determining at least a large proportion of the curriculum for their schools in order to address the differential needs of rural communities, inner city communities, multicultural communities and so on. A range of goals covering the entire spectrum of human needs and endeavours should be considered if the school is to be truly effective. Only a decision-making process that involved local communities could fully identify what those goals might be. The core-plus school might be the answer.

The Core-plus curriculum

Townsend (1994a) argued that all schools should have some common goals for all students, and these goals are usually determined by educational systems or governments. There should also be locally determined goals which relate to the specific needs of children who live in distinct communities, and these might vary from school to school. This framework might be labelled the *core-plus* curriculum, where the core is the state mandated obligations of the school, including some goals similar to those that relate to success in literacy and numeracy, but the plus would be determined by the school community. This difference in emphasis has implications for future decisions

about educational management, as it involves the empowerment of the people at the school site.

The common factor is not curricular in the academic sense, but is based on social justice. If all students have equal opportunities to achieve the school's goals, and do so, then the school is effective, regardless of whether those goals are academic, social or personal. This provides support for what might be considered as a 'core-plus framework' of a school, where the academic, citizenship and employment roles that have always been a central component of the school's focus are complemented by a more broadly based curriculum that incorporates the development of personal skills, leadership skills and involvement activities for a range of people at all levels of school operation.

There would be a recognition that some goals would be mandatory for all students and some would relate to the geographical and social area in which they live. For a school to be effective, all goals, both mandatory and local, would need to be achieved by all or most students. A school that concentrated on the mandatory goals would be effective only if that is what the local community chose, but a school that chose a range of other goals would only be seen to be effective if those goals, and the mandatory ones, were both achieved.

The Core-plus school

The acceptance of a core-plus curriculum brings with it the possibility of the core-plus school. Consideration needs to be given to widening the brief of schools to assist in the resolution of the educational needs for all of the people in the community that it serves, not just the community's children. The core-plus curriculum, which could be considered as maintaining a core of state-mandated requirements for all students, plus the curriculum determined locally (based on the needs of the children from particular communities), could be expanded to become the core-plus school where the core activity, namely, the education of children, was enhanced by a range of other formal and informal programs for the community as a whole. The school would become a learning facility for the whole of the community and would be available to them on demand. Schools can no longer afford to be static institutions because society no longer changes gradually. To respond to the rapidly changing world, schools must teach new knowledge, new skills and new attitudes. The development of the core-plus school provides the opportunity for schools to be both architects and supporters of community development and change.

Chapman refers to the Wittgensteinian notion of 'the rope' (1958) as a means to explain better 'the qualitative and quantitative aspects inherent in the concept of school effectiveness' (Chapman, 1992:3). A rope neither has a single fibre running from one end of its length to the other, nor two distinct fibres running from either end and

meeting in the middle. The same notion could also be used to describe the need to consider a multi-faceted approach to the role of schools. Just like the rope, so too, the core-plus view of schools would not rely upon just one or two key features, such as the mandated curriculum or the principal of the school, for its success. The core-plus school relies upon the individual concerns and judgements of the people involved at the school level to build the strength of the overall rope. Variation in the individual strands, when woven together by teamwork and communication, create the essential thread of the school that ensures that all of the individual needs are responded to.

If the analogy of the rope were taken one step further, it would be possible to generate the analogy to the fabric of society. If all the ropes, or threads of a fabric are identical in colour and thickness, then the fabric itself is usually designed for a single purpose. On the other hand, if the individual threads are different colours, different thickness, are composed of slightly different materials, and so on, the fabric becomes a tapestry, rich, full of colour, and capable of many different interpretations. In a society that is dominated by the economic rationalist ideology, or any other single ideology, the school system that has a concentration on specific curricula and standardisation, will most likely produce a uniform, and possibly colourless society.

Alternatively, a core-plus approach to schooling would create a school system where all of the individual threads (schools) would differ, based on their own local characteristics although they would have a similar underlying composition, brought about by the common areas of the curriculum. A tapestry woven from the ten thousand or so threads of any school system would become interesting and colourful. Many of those individual threads would provide the direction that the economic rationalists, the current dominant ideology, would have us go, and all of the threads would have some common element that would enable this to occur; but others would enable the diversity and richness of a community to show through even while we were moving in that direction. The richness of heritage, the diversity of cultures, the strength of sporting prowess and the community spirit of an urban or rural population would all be an integral part of the tapestry, and would be accepted as equally important to the future as was the need for economic competitiveness.

The core-plus idea enables schools to meet the requirements of the state in terms of minimal standards in literacy and numeracy (from Edmonds, 1978), yet make decisions at the school level that would enhance the quality of education for the students of that particular school. Thus a variety of programs might be designed to meet the needs of a small rural community, a community with a high multicultural population, a community within a housing estate, a community in a satellite town, a newly established community or one that has been in existence for many years. All of these communities rely upon the school's ability to make judgements about what its

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community requires, and use the resources of the local community, rather than those provided by the state, to ensure that these requirements were met.

It could also be argued that schools are better placed now than they were twenty years ago to respond to future changes that will occur in our society. Yet there are those arguing for a return to the educational structures that was in place twenty years ago, such as a concentration on basic academic skills, a standardised curriculum, and formal examinations as a means to standardised testing. It might be argued that the educational structures of twenty years ago were inappropriate then, but even if they were not, it is unlikely that old remedies can satisfactorily resolve totally new problems.

What seems to be needed is not a rearrangement of the toys in the toy box, but a totally new box of toys, as argued by Minzey (1981) and Kerensky (1989). The educational structures of the past will not resolve child abuse, broken homes, the youth drug and alcohol problem, a poor attitude towards continuing education and, in the end, will not resolve unemployment. These current features of our society will only be resolved by a new conception of life-long learning that does not equate schooling and education, but identifies one's time at school as being one aspect of a process that continues from birth to death. It could also be argued that since huge amounts of public funds are utilised on the plant, personnel, facilities and programs of schools, they should broaden their role from one of being responsible for the schooling of children, to become one of being responsible for the education of communities.

Schools could become the focus for community development for the whole of the community as well as for the educational programs of children. The concept of a core-plus school in the wider sense, as a learning centre for the whole community may well be one outcome of higher levels of community involvement in school decision-making and management that Schools of the Future can bring. Given the need for the conservation and careful utilisation of scarce and expensive resources, such as the plant and equipment required for a wide range of school curricula, the core-plus school might be cost-effective as well as academically effective.

This view indicates support for what Staples (1989) called the 100/100 school. He argued that many schools currently serve about twenty percent of the population for about twenty percent of the time, and could be labelled 20/20 schools. A school that opened its doors to the total community, at times that were convenient for the community as a whole (before school, after school, weekdays, weekends, holidays) approaches the 100/100 goal. Although no schools actually get this far, it is a far more cost effective use of community resources to have even 100/50 schools, serving all of the community for half of the time, than it is to have 20/20 schools.

The development of the core-plus school will take much more time and consideration. Schools of the Future will have to direct their attention to a much larger proportion of the community than is currently the case. Consideration of ways in which

the redesigning of schools might be able to cope with the future educational needs of the adult population as well as those of the children will have to be undertaken. The use of the school buildings could be increased from the current ten to fifteen percent of the year (seven hours per day, five days per week, forty weeks per year), through the use of year round schools, where classes for students are available all year round, or simply by having community programs outside normal school hours and during vacations. If schools could also be utilised by more people, from the current twenty per cent of the population, who are between the ages of five and eighteen, to a much higher proportion of the population as a whole, the cost effectiveness of schools could never be questioned.

This 'core-plus' approach to restructuring not only ensures that national needs are addressed, but identifies and resolves specific needs of local communities as well. And if the restructuring initiative is to work community educators have a role to play, because principals and school staff will need a lot of assistance, not only in learning how to be involved in greater levels of decision-making, but more importantly, in learning how to listen to what the community is saying and responding to their needs.

What has been argued here is that all schools should develop the characteristics of some community schools that now exist, but they do it using a solid basis of research evidence as to how this will improve the educational opportunities of all children. Townsend (1994b) found that people in regular schools in the USA indicated a higher level of perceived effectiveness in their schools than did people from community schools. We need to ask ourselves why people in community schools think they are less effective than ordinary schools and we need to address those concerns. Perhaps it is because people in community schools feel that there is less emphasis on the academic components than is required. If so, community schools of the future must address this issue. The community school of the future will need to have a strong curriculum, but one that focuses on the needs of the community as a whole.

With the implementation of Schools of the Future, the principal becomes the key to the school's success. In the past, the principal simply administered, that is, implemented decisions made by remote education authorities. But leadership and management skills are becoming increasingly important as each school makes its unique response to the demands made by the state, the system and the local community. The introduction of the self-managing philosophy into a school makes the issue of leadership even more critical, since it not only considers demands and structures that are already in place, but moves the school through a process of redesign. The key to the change is the principal and how he or she responds to the challenges ahead.

In order to lead the school community, principals will need to establish, maintain and regularly consult with it and involve the people in the decisions which affect them. They will need to establish good relationships between each of the various groups

within the school and establish processes which will enable each group to work with others in a meaningful and positive way. In this way principals will be able to develop feelings of trust and understanding between the school council, community and staff. Principals will need to encourage the school council to exercise its role in the decision making process and provide them with necessary support and training to ensure that it is effective.

The principal, to a large extent is able to facilitate the development of the culture of the school, through the means and levels of communication within the school and the tone and direction that the school will take. The most critical factor for the principal is that he or she must engender a high level of support for the school by all groups, and a high level of participation and activity across a range of curricular and extra-curricular interests, develop quality communications within the school and good relationships between all those involved. It is unreasonable to expect that individual principals will be able to do this alone, so the essence of leadership in the self-managing school is for it to be an expected responsibility of many, rather than just a few. Perhaps one of the critical flaws in the Victorian plan is that it places all the responsibility upon the principal without providing necessary structures for other leadership development in the school. Although much of the principal training activities conducted by the DSE have emphasised good management and leadership, the actuality of this happening in the schools depends entirely on the attitude of the principal towards developing and empowering a leadership team. Some will do this well, but others may choose to keep the balance of power, which may create further problems as time goes by.

CONCLUSIONS

Although it is too early to be analysing any results from the development of the Schools of the Future program, research is under way that will enable a better understanding of the program's progress. A longitudinal study, 'Leading Victoria's Schools of the Future', commenced in 1993 and continuing until December 1997, is considering the purposes, processes and outcomes of Victoria's Schools of the Future program, particularly as it affects the role of the principal in this development. Other studies are seeking to establish what school communities feel about the program, and how well the goals identified in the school charters suit the demographics of the community in which the school operates.

The Victorian Schools of the Future program is really the brave new world of Australian education. Not only has the Victorian government determined that all Victorian government schools will become self-managing, but the structures of education are changing so rapidly that teachers and parents have barely assimilated one change when another is put forward. The Schools of the Future program is in its infancy. There are a number of areas that have caused concern, but there are a number

of others that bring hope. Perhaps the most critical issue in the near future relates to the responsibility of school leaders, from Ministers and bureaucrats, to principals of schools, to support the efforts of teachers and local communities and to demonstrate clearly that the short term problems are far outweighed by the long term opportunities for communities as a whole.

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